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CASTLE COMBE RINGWORK & BAILEYS: EARTHWORK SURVEY

Nicky Smith

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CASTLE COMBE CASTLE
WILTSHIRE

EARTHWORK SURVEY

Nicky Smith

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SUMMARY

Analytical earthwork survey of the castle at Castle Combe was undertaken by English Heritage in 2009 as part of a wider programme of archaeological work to improve understanding of the site and help develop permissive access proposals. This research report, compiled in 2020, accompanies the earlier survey. It examines the development of the earthworks and their wider landscape context.

The castle has never been excavated and its earthworks are complex, so a broad chronology is tentatively proposed here from analysis of the visible remains. It is plausible that the perimeter enclosure began as an Iron Age promontory fort and was adapted as a castle in the post-Conquest period. The inner core of the castle appears to have been reinforced later by the addition of a ringwork, embedding the lower part of a pre-existing tower. This may have occurred during the Anarchy period, when the castle was an important strategic stronghold housing a mint. An internal subdivision in bailey three may be the remains of an earlier layout. Building platforms in all baileys except the outermost, indicate that the castle was densely populated prior to its abandonment in the 14th century.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Phil McMahon, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Wiltshire in 2009, requested the survey and Nick Croxson, Heritage at Risk Projects Officer, Historic England, initiated follow-up work in 2019. Paul Bishop and Gaius Wyncoll, Managers of the Manor House Golf Club and Hotel, permitted access to the site. Swindon and Wiltshire Archives kindly allowed the reproduction of the postcard in figure 18 and their scan of Rev Downman's plan used in figure 6. The interpretation benefitted greatly from the results of previous work, particularly the geophysical survey. David Sabin kindly consented to the reproduction of his geophysical survey plan (Appendix 4).

ARCHIVE LOCATION

Historic England, The Engine House, Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 2EH

DATE OF SURVEY

2009 and 2019

CONTENTS

APPENDICES:

ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The castle (SM No. 12285; NMR ST 87 NW 2) is one of Wiltshire's largest and most enigmatic monuments. Despite its importance, it is poorly understood. Its construction is usually attributed to the Dunstanvilles, Barons of Castle Combe in the 12th century, but no documentary evidence of its early history has been found. Its significance is enhanced by its possible Iron Age origins. It is reputed to have been established on the site of an earlier settlement and may incorporate the defences of an Iron Age promontory fort.

The castle remains consist of large and well-preserved banks and ditches, which contain large quantities of collapsed stonework. A series of ramparts enclose well-defined earth-covered building footings, but the only masonry structure surviving is the square base of a tower embedded in the earthworks.

Although the picturesque village of Castle Combe has been used for film sets and is popular as part of tourist trails, the castle is not widely publicised. Its remains are situated within private grounds owned by the Manor House Hotel Golf Club and there is no public access. The outer bailey and its immediate surroundings were landscaped for golf in the 1990s and still form part of the golf course.

The analytical earthwork survey described here formed part of a multi-disciplinary programme of work carried out between 2007 and 2009. Its objectives were to identify and survey the castle's archaeological remains, shed light on its origins and development, consider how different areas of it may have been used and examine its wider historical and geographical contexts. The resulting plan provided a basis for management of the archaeological features alongside other interests, enabling the remains to be monitored and protected. It will also be used to inform future site management and potential opportunities for access and interpretation. The report on this phase of work was delayed for technical and managerial reasons.

A Heritage at Risk project is currently being developed with the aim of reducing risk to the monument, securing its long-term management, enabling permissive access and/or remote access and raising awareness of the site. In 2019 further work was requested to support this and inform future conservation management proposals and potential opportunities for permissive access to the site and/or remote web-based access. Recent discussions between the golf club and Historic England's Heritage at Risk Project Officer have been positive about future management. In 2017 the golf course manager agreed to allow guided walks of the site led by the Cotswold Wardens and expressed interest in allowing permissive public access from the nearby Macmillan Way long distance public footpath, avoiding the golf course.

LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND LAND-USE

The castle lies within in Castle Combe parish, at NGR ST 839778. It is an isolated site, the nearest villages being Castle Combe and Upper Castle Combe, over half a mile to the south-south-east and south-east respectively. The B4039, a former turnpike road partially following the line of a probable ancient route, runs 500m north-east of the castle. The Fosse Way is 700m to the north-west. (Figure 1)

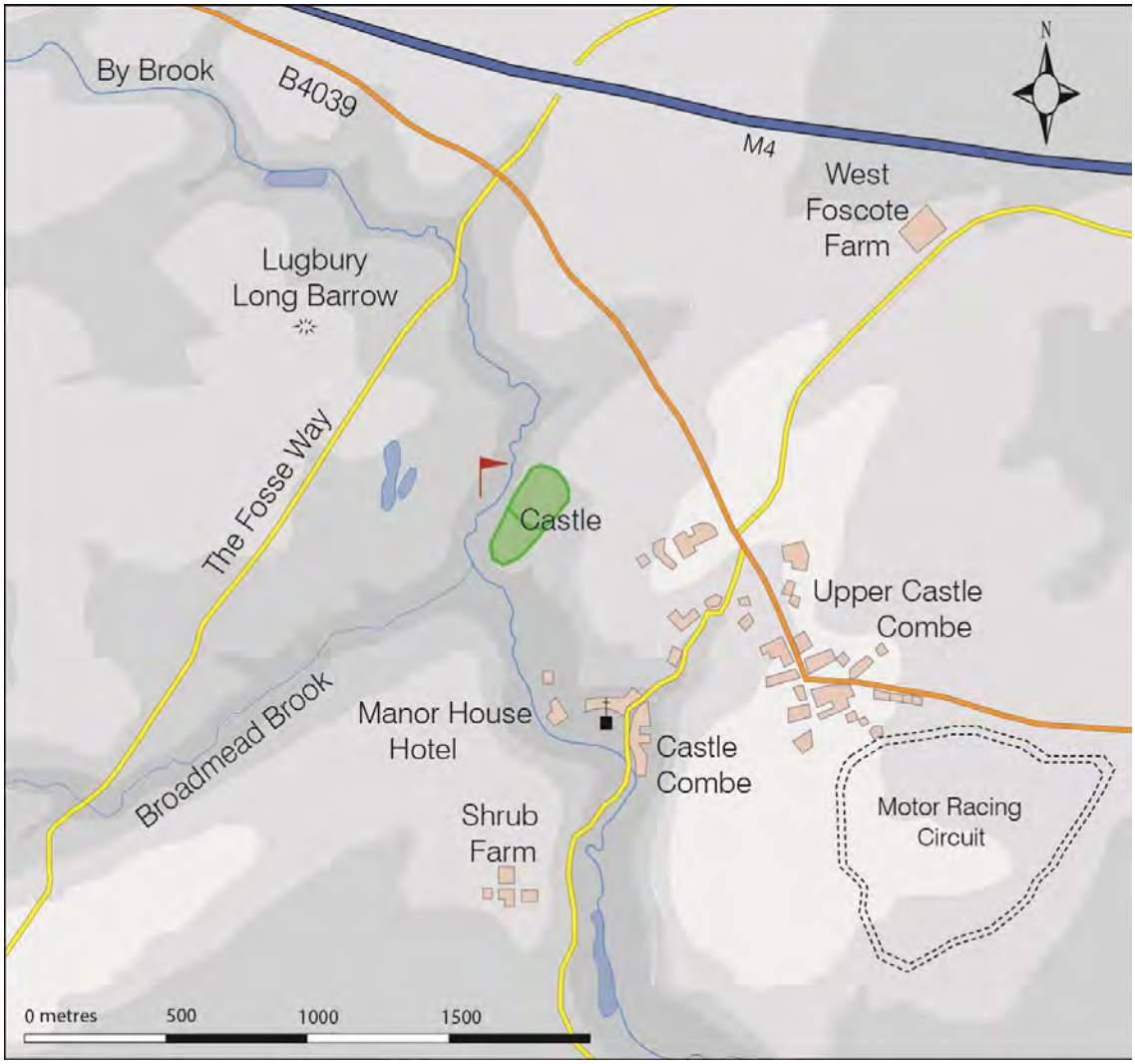

Figure 1: Location plan

The castle's remains occupy a strong promontory site on Castle Hill, a rocky west-facing spur of land rising approximately 130m OD above the confluence of the Broadmead Brook and the By Brook. The steep-sloping sides of the promontory provide natural defences on its western and south-eastern sides.

The underlying geological composition of Castle Hill is Great Oolitic Limestone. The slopes below the castle have been quarried for building material since the Roman period and are scarred by old stone pits. The castle's foundations were constructed

on solid rock, which outcrops in the outer ramparts. The overlying soil is generally shallow, well drained, brashy and calcareous brown rendzina of the Sherborne Association, though slowly permeable clay covers the eastern part of the site. Such soil is suitable for cereal growing, dairying and stock-rearing pasture (Soil Survey 1983), however, the steep valley sides and higher ground have all supported coarse pasture and woodland throughout their documented history. By the 19th century most of the hill and the surrounding area was used for tree plantations.

Figure 2: Nineteenth-century depiction showing the castle site from the east, published by the 19th-century owner G Poulett Scrope (Scrope 1852, 12). He commissioned the hilltop tower to mark its remains

Today the castle is the subject of two different management regimes. The outer bailey forms part of the golf course and is for the most part managed sympathetically. The remainder lies under woodland which is not routinely managed. Stands of coppiced hazels survive as a relic of earlier woodland management, but the archaeological remains in this area are at risk from unchecked tree and understorey growth and by thorn thickets which have partially colonised the inner baileys. In addition to disturbance caused by root growth, several mature trees have caused damage in recent years through wind-throw, including to the ringwork earthwork and the southern ramparts. The visual presentation of the monument is also compromised by trees, dense scrub and understorey growth.

Although efforts at tree and scrub control were made by the voluntary Cotswold Wardens between 2016 and 2019, the extent of the work required to bring the monument into a stable condition is beyond their capacity. In addition to this, as a voluntary group, the Cotswold Wardens have declined to continue further conservation work at the site until such time as permissive or online access/interpretation can be made available in order to provide public benefit. For these reasons the castle site is currently listed on the national Heritage at Risk Register.

Figure 3: Golf course landscaping with the approach road to the castle, from the north-east

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Human activity since early prehistoric times is evident in the area surrounding the castle. Stray finds in Devizes Museum's catalogue include Mesolithic microliths, Neolithic flint scrapers, retouched flakes, waste flakes, a broken fabricator and a Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead (Accs DZSWS:1990.7.11-16; see also Wiltshire & Swindon HER ST 87 NW 150, 550 & ST 87 NE 050, 052). However, any prehistoric structural remains have almost all been destroyed, including a 'cromlech' or 'Druids Stones', of which an engraving can be seen in the Museum (DZSWS:2001.5115). Nearby Lugbury Neolithic long barrow (HER ST 87 NW 100) is a rare survival and a further long barrow is situated on the brow of a hill opposite Castle Combe manor house, close to where a large number of Roman coins were also found (Jackson 1862, 63fn; HER ST 87 NW 306). Two further mounds to the north-west of the castle (at ST 841775 and ST 841777) were identified as potential Bronze Age round barrows, but they were dismissed by OS investigators (HER ST 87 NW 602 & 603).

The earliest occupation evidence in the area surrounding the castle dates from the Iron Age period. Watching briefs on cropmarks cut by a gas pipeline (at ST 89807667) and a prehistoric flint scatter (at ST 88807653) found ditches, pits and post-holes with Iron Age and 2nd-century Romano-British pottery (HER ST 87 NE 625). Further excavations, centred at ST 87907998, examined Romano-British ditches, pits and a well dating from the 1st-3rd centuries AD, while an Iron Age ditch was found immediately to the north (Anon 1999, 134; HER ST 87 NE 202, 306, 603).

By the Roman period this area of Wiltshire was evidently well populated and the landscape was being farmed extensively. The Fosse Way provided a focus for Romano-British activity, which included a shrine to Apollo and a settlement at Nettleton Shrub (Wilts HER ST 87 NW 302, 305 & 313; Wedlake 1982). On the hills around the village, a hoard of 300 brass coins and a carved stone depicting a hunter spearing a deer, possibly an altar to Diana, was found at Shrub Hill (HER ST 87 NW 306). North of Shrub Farm (ST83717709) there was a small Romano-British settlement (HER ST 87 NW 307) and a large stone coffin was found with fragments of Roman tiles and pottery (Scrope 1852, 6-7; HER ST 87 NW 304). Truckle Hill was also the site of a villa and other buildings, including a bath house (HER ST 87 NW 304, MW175234, ST 87 NW 314).

Roman coins unearthed from gardens and around the church at Castle Combe indicate that the village may have been founded on the site of a Roman settlement or shrine. Devizes Museum has c220 copper alloy Roman coins dated to the 3rd or 4th century AD excavated from Castle Combe (1825) or North Wraxall (1859-60) (DZSWS2005.30.1-219) and the name 'The Street' applied to the village's main road is a possible indicator of Roman settlement. A multitude of other stray finds of the period include Romano-British pottery fragments found on the golf course immediately north-east of the castle (HER ST 87 NW 308) and Romano-British finds from Castle Combe Park (HER ST 87 NW 301, ALM 225 County Archaeology Service).

There is very little archaeological evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation in the parish. However, Saxon coins are reported to have been found in the 'area of' the castle', along with 'iron arrowheads, buckles, spurs (some of ancient Norman form)' (Scrope 1852, 10). Anglo-Saxon place-names are used for the villages 'Neider Combe' (Under Combe) and 'Combe' or 'Come' and later inhabitants of Castle Combe are believed to have enjoyed special rights and privileges, known as '*Jura Regalia*', which were usually attached to Saxon royal vills. They also elected their own officers, had local courts of Justice and byelaws (Scrope 1852, 166). According to John Aubrey, Alfred the Great defeated the Danes in a battle at Slaughterford, a mile south of Castle Combe. The Danish chieftain 'Hubba' was reputed to have been killed in the battle and buried nearby, in a tumulus known as 'Hubba's Lowe' (Jackson 1862, 2).

HISTORY

THE MANOR

The Domesday Book (1086) lists two estates in Wiltshire, named 'Cumbe' and 'Come', either of which could be the later manor of Castle Combe. 'Come' was identified by Scrope, a 19th-century owner of the manor and author of a book on its history (Scrope 1852) as the correct match. Prior to the Norman Conquest Suain is recorded as having held the estate, but in 1086 it was among twenty-seven Wiltshire manors in the possession of Humphrey de Insula. The bulk of his estate lay in the north-east of the county, but smaller portions were scattered. The manor was assessed at ten hides and ten ploughlands, with nearly five hides and four ploughlands in demesne. It also had twelve acres of meadow and a large wood, approximately three miles long by one and a half miles broad. It was inhabited by thirteen serfs, five villains, seven borderers and five cottagers. In total it was worth £10 (Scrope 1852, 13-14).

The manorial descent of 'Come' is complex. Humphrey's daughter and heir Adeliza married a Renaud, or Reginald, de Dunstanville, which brought his properties to the Dunstanville family (Scrope 1852, 15). This Reginald has been mixed up with another Reginald de Dunstanville who was an illegitimate son of Henry I and first Earl of Cornwall. Very little is known about the family and Bartholomew Badlesmere (see below) was, on the face of it, a much more considerable figure and a major landholder, perhaps a more likely builder or possessor of such a large castle as Combe, but this may merely reflect a lack of surviving records for the Dunstanvilles in the earlier period (M Bowden pers comm).

The area around Castle Combe was a focus of great contention during the mid-12th century Anarchy, when civil war was waged between Stephen and Matilda. Important battles and sieges took place at Marlborough, Salisbury, Devizes, Malmesbury, Bristol, Gloucester, Tetbury, Cricklade and Faringdon (Scrope 1852, 22). Castles already existed at Devizes, Ludgershall, Downton, Malmesbury, Old Sarum, Trowbridge and Marlborough by this time and Anarchy period fortifications are documented at Calne, Cricklade and Wilton (Cathcart King 1983, 497; Creighton 2000, 108). No documentary evidence has been discovered for any part Combe castle might have played in the conflict, but the Dunstanvilles were known to have been supporters of Matilda's cause.

The castle and its estate continued to be held by rebellious barons. In 1212 it was forfeited when the lord of the manor, Walter de Dunstanville, joined rebel barons against King John. The Dunstanvilles regained possession of the estate on John's death and a further Walter (d.1270), was the third and final Baron of that name (Scrope 1852, 37). In 1313 the estate was sold to Bartholomew, Baron Badlesmere, of Leeds Castle, Kent, who was beheaded for treason against Edward II in 1322 (Scrope 1852, 45, 54, 57, 62). His estate was forfeited to the Crown and given to the

king's favourite, Hugh le Despenser, who was also executed following the king's abdication and murder (Scrope 1852, 63). Edward III restored the manor to Lady Margaret, the widow of Lord Badlesmere. It passed to her son Giles and then to his sister Margaret (Scrope 1852, 64-70).

Margaret's son Robert Tibetot inherited the estate in 1368 and by 1392 a small manor house already existed to the south of the castle, probably on the site of the later manor house (Scrope 1852, 202, 376) where the Manor House Hotel now stands. This would almost certainly have certainly replaced the castle as the baronial centre.

Figure 4: Knight's tomb, St Andrew's Church, Castle Combe, believed to portray Sir Walter de Dunstanville, Baron of Castle Combe (d.1270).

A long association between Castle Combe and the Scrope family began in 1375, when Sir Richard Scrope, Lord of Bolton, paid 1,000 marks for the wardship of the co-heiresses to the manor and married one of them, Millicent, to his son Stephen (Scrope 1852, 141-2). In the early-15th century widowed Lady Millicent Scrope married Sir John Fastolf (who probably never visited Castle Combe, but bequeathed money to build its church tower and a chapel in 1459) (Scrope 1852, 169, 189, 202). After his death the lordship reverted to Stephen Scrope and the manor continued to be held by the Scropes, or their namesakes, for almost five hundred years.

In 1867, the estate was sold to Edward Chaddock Lowndes (who had changed his surname from Gorst on inheriting some family property). He spent much of his fortune improving it. On his death, in 1909, the estate passed to his brother, Sir John Gorst. Occupied by tenants until the Second World War, the manor house was then requisitioned as a hospital for local RAF units. In 1947 it was sold at auction, along with most of the village properties

(https://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/getcom.php?id=46).

THE VILLAGE

Castle Combe village, taking its name from the castle, is the closest settlement to the castle, lying about half a mile to the south-east in the sheltered valley of the By Brook. Whether it was the place of habitation of the thirty people living at the manor of 'Come' in 1086 is not known. In the following century Walter de Dunstanville was granted the right to hold a weekly market in his 'town' of 'Combe' by Henry II (1133-1189) (Scrope 1852, 33) but, again, the identification of this 'town' with the current village is not certain and it could refer to settlement at the castle. According to Aubrey, a fair was held at the castle *'...in one* [division of the castle] *whereof tis by tradition that there was kept the market...'* (Scrope 1852, 11).

The village church was largely rebuilt in the mid-19th century. However, an Early English (1180-1250) window of lancet lights surmounted by a quatrefoil was discovered blocked up in the east wall (Jackson 1862, 65), indicating that the building and probably its associated settlement was in existence by at least the mid-13th century.

The village prospered and expanded greatly as a centre for cloth making during the 14th and 15th centuries, its red and white cloth being popular on the Continent. The cloth trade brought an influx of workers and fifty tenements were built to accommodate weavers, fullers and dyers. By 1340 the number of tenants had risen to fifty-eight and the village had four corn mills and a fulling mill powered by the By Brook. Growth continued for another 160 years and by the end of the 15th century thirteen mills operated along the river (Bishop nd, 3).

A polyfocal settlement emerged with a characteristic planned element. Lower Castle Combe was situated south of the village core and Upper Castle Combe lay to the north-east. In addition to the 'Lower Manor House' occupying the site of the current Manor House Hotel, there was also an 'Upper Manor House'. West Street, where the hotel stands, was the old road leading to the castle.

The village's fortunes changed during the early-18th century, when a drop in the water level of the By Brook meant that it could no longer supply enough power to drive mills. Other factors, such as shrinking exports and falling prices for coarse cloth, combined with the production of finer cloth in Salisbury and west Wiltshire, almost certainly contributed to its decline. The village's population dwindled by the 19th century and markets were no longer held regularly.

THE CASTLE

The Domesday Book does not list any castles in Wiltshire (Creighton 2000, 114) and there is no known documentary evidence for the castle's early history. It is first mentioned in a mid-15th century account by William of Worcester, at which time it was already derelict (Scrope 1852, 10).

While theories about its precise date of construction vary, it is generally attributed to the Dunstanville family in the 12th century and accepted as having been the centre of Castle Combe barony. It could have been built by the de Dunstanvilles during the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) or during the wars of Stephen in c1140. William Camden believed it was later, constructed between 1140-1175 (Scrope 1852, 32). The Wiltshire HER and National Monuments Record (NMR) suggest a tentative date of c1140, supporting the hypothesis that it was an Anarchy period castle. While Creighton believes it is most likely to have been constructed during the reign of Henry I, he states that 'an initial Anarchy period fortification on the site cannot be discounted' (Creighton 2000, 114).

The castle was probably occupied into at least the late-13th century, when the seat of the Barony was transferred to Sir Robert Tibetot's manor house in Castle Combe village. It was clearly abandoned by the end of the 14th century, since William of Worcester comments that it had been destroyed by the reign of Henry IV (1399-1413) (Scrope 1852, 10). It perhaps provided materials for the new manor house and the expanding village.

The keep remained relatively intact and conspicuous for several centuries following the castle's demise. Up until the end of the 17th century it could still be seen from Corsham, five miles away (Scrope 1852, 10). By the 19th century it had been lowered to the extent that it was no longer visible, so a 'rude round tower' was built close to the southern tip of the ruins to mark the castle's position when viewed from the valley below (Scrope 1852, 57). This 19th-century tower was demolished in 1950.

DEER PARK AND RABBIT WARREN

Medieval castles show a clear link with hunting resources and a great number were associated with private deer parks (Creighton & Higham 2003, 57). In 1314-15 Lord Badlesmere obtained the right of free warren in all his demesnes (Scrope 1852, 57) and he may have been responsible for the creation of a deer park adjacent to the castle. The deer park was evidently well established by 1352, when it was mentioned in a memorandum (Scrope 1852, 81-82). Fines for poaching inside it were recorded in subsequent manorial court rolls (Scrope 1852, 155). Parks were valuable assets requiring a large amount of investment and maintenance. Bailiff's accounts for 1458-1459 list 20/- for the repair of the 'lodge in the park' with masonry and tiling and a further 20/- allowed for the repair of 'Doe's lodge' in the park (Scrope 1852, 250-251). The area was disparked in the 17th century, when sheep farming became more profitable, though deer continued to be kept in some areas around the village up until the 1960s (Scrope 1852, 230; Bishop nd. 12).

The park would have been enclosed by a substantial deer-proof boundary. No earthwork trace of this is evident today and its extent is not obvious from fence lines or other features. However, place-names recorded in manorial documents help to

indicate the parkland's former extent, which appears to have been mainly to the south and east of the castle and 'Park Lane' leads from the village in the direction of the castle and park.

The park was well stocked with deer, rabbits and hares under the care of a park keeper, who rented a rabbit warren for a fixed sum during John Fastolf's lordship (1409-1459) (Scrope 1852, 202). Two pillow mounds in the outer bailey were probably associated with the park and created after the castle fell out of use. Aerial photographs (ST 8477/5) taken in 1974, before the creation of the golf course, show at least two further examples outside the castle. One (Wilts HER ST 87 NW 610) at ST84107754 and another (ST 87 NW 611) at ST83747709. A further aerial photograph (HEA RAF 106G/UK/1415 4396-8 14-APR-46) shows pillow mounds and a possible enclosure between the castle and manor house.

PREVIOUS WORK

Antiquaries provide the earliest descriptions of the castle's ruins and theories as to its origins. William of Worcester, writing in 1450-1460, stated that:

> There was a castle in the middle of the park here, seated upon a hill, which was destroyed by the pagan people coming from the kingdom of the Danes as invaders and enemies to King Alfred, in the year of Christ eight hundred and seventy eight (Scrope 1852, 8).

In the seventeenth century the castle was described by John Aubrey, who repeated the earlier opinion of its origins:

> The Castle stands on a hill, North from the Towne, about a quarter of a mile, the area of compasse of it...divisions, in one whereof, ('tis by tradition) that there was kept the market. And on the hills in the park, were, Ao.1645, felled many a gallant oak...The Castle, (whereof now remains the Toft) strongly seated on a steep hill, was demolished in the time of the Danes.; Jo Scrope, Esq hath some old writings that mention so much. Q what year (AD 878) by AD600 There is ample evidence that the entrenched camp abandoned by the Celts after the Roman invasion was re-occupied by the Saxons (Jackson 1862, 63-64).

An editorial footnote by Jackson in his edition of Aubrey's work (1862, 63) states that:

> Of the castle itself nothing remains but the site...The area is divided into four enclosures of unequal size by earthworks and deep trenches. The buildings stood within the northernmost. The site of the keep-tower may still be recognised by the excavation of the two lower stories within the walls of masonry 10ft thick. Near this a modern round tower has been erected to mark the position of the old castle from a distance in the mass of wood. Sir RC

> Hoare gives a ground plan of the earthworks and considers them to be of Saxon origin, but their antiquity is probably greater. Some early work may have been destroyed by the Danes...but the Castle at Combe is considered to have been built by the Dunstanville family. Aubrey's intentions of preserving a draught of the Keep was not fulfilled.

In 1821 Sir Richard Colt Hoare noted the presence of 'wall foundations, a raised mound, and other circumstances', which he attributed 'to a Saxon origin' and reiterates that 'history reports its having been ravaged by the Danes'. He made a sketch map of the castle's remains (figure 5) which shows gaps in the inter-bailey earthworks further north than they are today or on later plans of the site (Colt Hoare 1821).

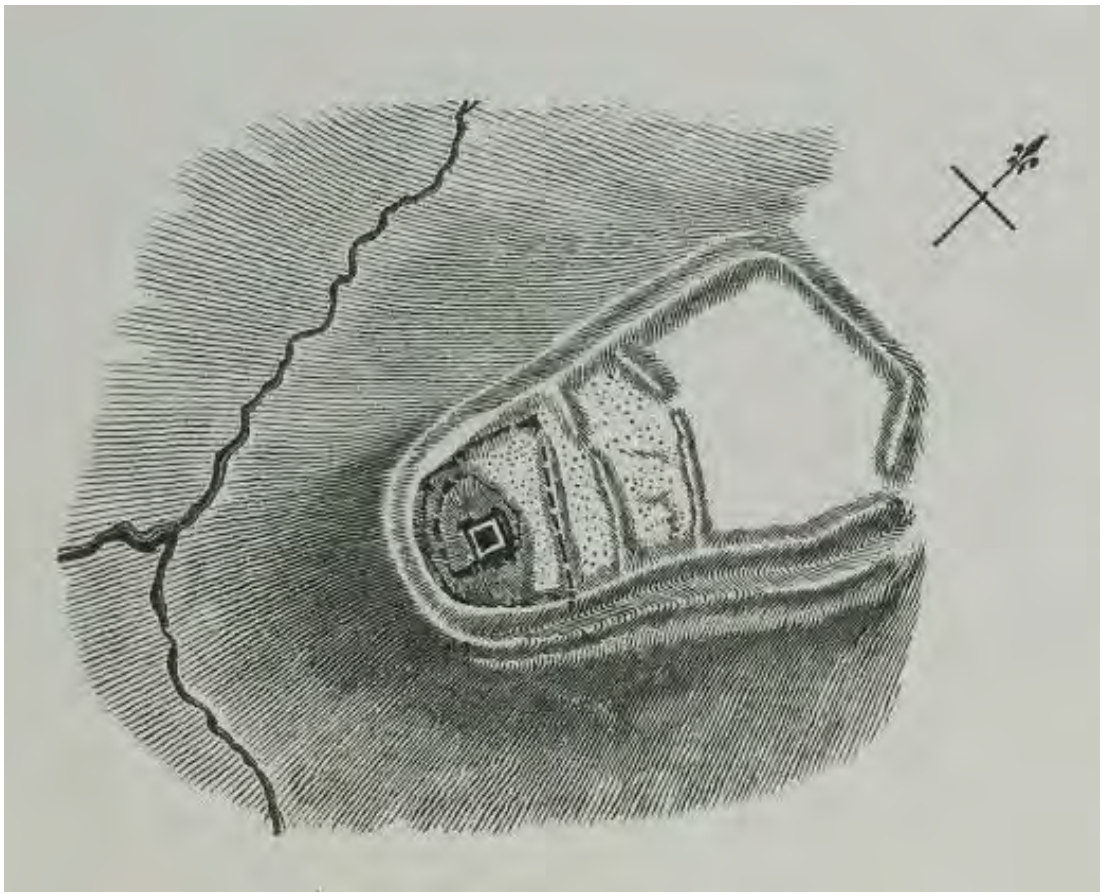

Figure 5: Plan of the castle remains (Scrope1852, 8) using Colt Hoare's depiction of 1821. The darker black detail was Scrope's addition

A few years before 1852, the interior of the keep was cleared of debris and its two lower stories were revealed. Fragments of carved stonework exhibiting a 'very rude style of Norman architecture' were found among the infill (Scrope 1852, 8).

In 1956 wall foundations were still visible in the inner bailey, along with the remains of the keep, which was cleared of undergrowth and trees again. Repair work to the tower revealed (ex-situ) fragments of a Roman cornice and column base

(Crittall 1973, 261).

The first accurate survey of the castle was the Ordnance Survey's 25" late-19th century plan, which was used as a basis for the Rev EA Downman's plan of the site (figure 6) included in his *Plans of Wiltshire Earthworks* (Downman 1901-1909).

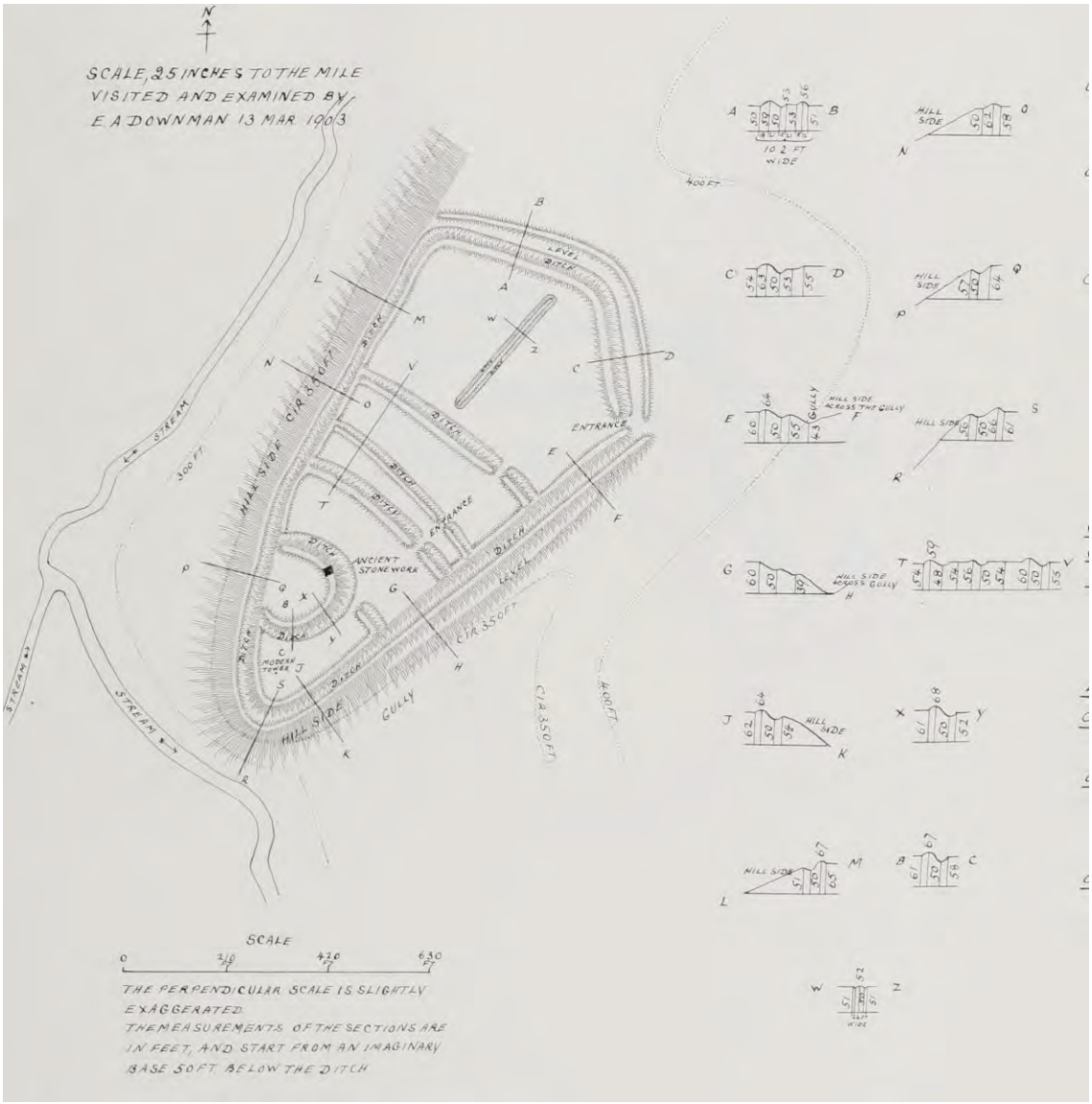

Figure 6: The Rev E Downman's plan of the remains [reproduced by kind permission of Swindon & Wiltshire Archives, ref: AAA.930]

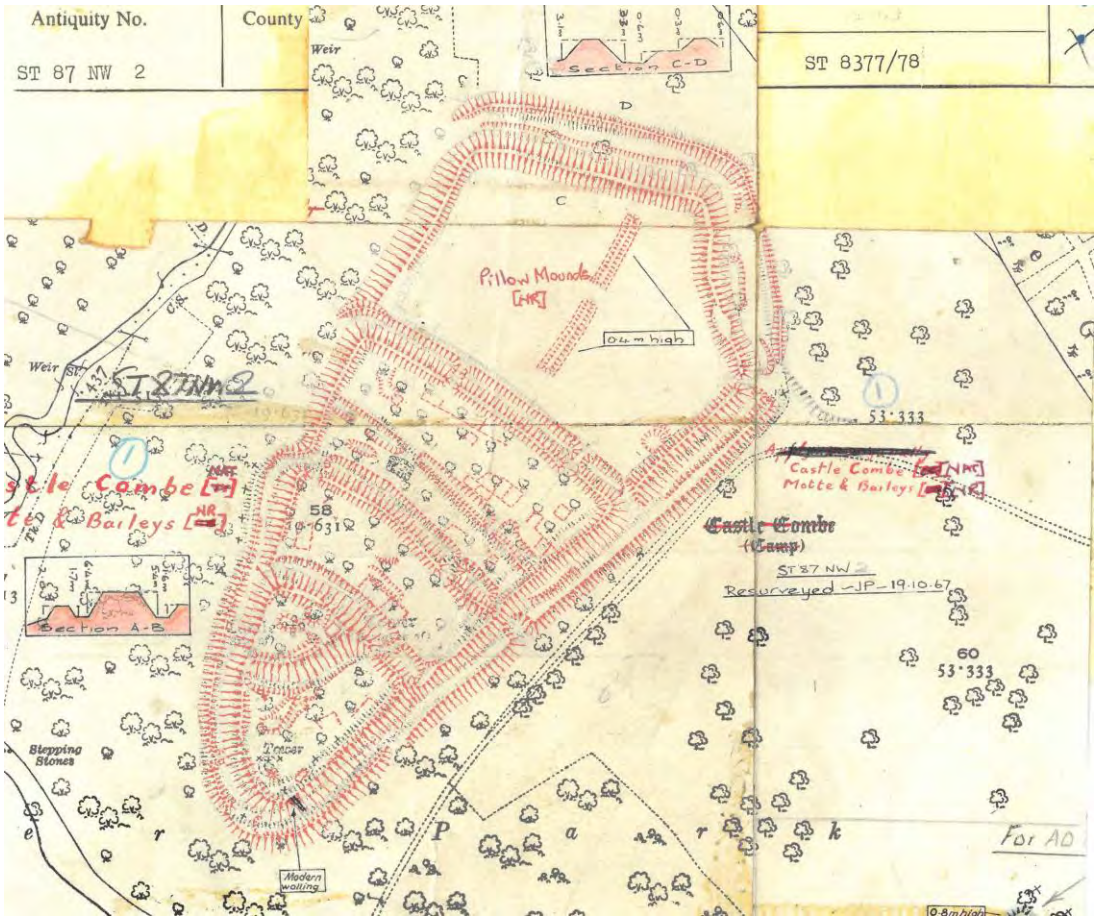

Figure 7: Ordnance Survey Antiquity Model showing a 25" resurvey of 1967

Despite its considerable archaeological potential, the castle has never been excavated. Modern archaeological examination began with a condition survey by Chippenham College Practical Archaeology Group (CCPAG) in 1990-1991 following the sale of the site and its surroundings for golf course development. It was already heavily overgrown with scrub and woodland and the archaeological remains had been damaged by tree roots torn out in exceptional gales. The survey, directed by Dr R Wilcox, confirmed the survival of most features depicted earlier by the Ordnance Survey. The foundations of a shell keep with at least one tower occupied a motte and walls were observed around the motte. Stone revetment was noted on the outer faces of the inner bailey defences and the foundations of at least seventeen buildings were recorded in the two innermost baileys (Anon 1993, 159; Anon 1992, 158; Creighton 2000, 114).

The poor condition of the castle's remains subsequently became a cause of concern to both English Heritage, later to become Historic England, and Wiltshire County Council. Initiatives by EH, the County Council and the landowner in the 2000s aimed to safeguard the remains. EH invested in repairs to the tower as part of a joint EH/WCC funded Monument Management Scheme. A detailed record of the tower, including measured drawings, was made by Cotswold Archaeology during work to clear and stabilise the structure (Barber 2009). This identified at least two

main structural phases, the earliest with a doorway through the north wall. This was blocked by material piled around it, indicating that the tower was originally freestanding. Its floors were probably remodelled, but it was believed to have been at least three storeys tall. Four pottery sherds of local unglazed coarse ware from the core of the east wall confirmed an early medieval (post-Conquest) date for the upper part of the surviving structure (Barber 2009, 8-10).

Developing public access to the site and improving understanding and interpretation of the archaeological remains became priorities following public investment. EH and Wiltshire County Council sought to improve visibility of the monument by clearing vegetation and to develop a permissive access agreement with the site owners. A programme of investigative work was commissioned to provide fresh information about the castle and its origins.

In 2007 Archaeological Surveys was contracted by the Council (with funding from English Heritage) to carry out Digital Terrain Modelling (DTM) and geophysical survey over selected areas of the site. This was followed, in March 2007, by Ground Penetrating Radar survey of a small area in the vicinity of the keep, by Arrow Geophysics.

Resistivity survey covered a significant part of the castle's interior, but excluded the outer bailey, steep slopes near the motte and overgrown areas (Sabin & Donaldson 2007, 11). Although surface rubble and anthills proved problematic, stone-built structures were confidently interpreted within the inner baileys. Amorphous structures were interpreted as potential stone-robbed buildings, although minor quarrying was another possibility. Other debris and several depressions appeared inconsistent with building remains. Stone extraction for the castle or post-castle quarrying were thought to be their most likely origin. Sunken-featured buildings at odds with the 'grain' of the site's development offered potential evidence supporting the theory that the castle was imposed upon an Iron Age promontory fort. High resistance close to the edge of the ditch along the south-western sides of the inner baileys was interpreted as possible wall remains, indicating that the perimeters of the inner baileys were surrounded by walls.

Magnetometry could not be undertaken in the inner baileys, due to trees and surface vegetation, but the outer bailey and an area to the north of the outer defences were examined. The outer bailey was mainly undeveloped, but linear anomalies were interpreted as cut features and structures. Parallel positive and negative magnetic responses on the pillow mounds indicated a series of internal runs constructed in stone. North of the defences, traces of a large second ditch were discovered, of which no surface indication remains. This suggested a defensive system of at least two large banks and ditches, while a narrow causeway across the outer ditch and a distinct termination to its southern end indicated a more complex defensive system than is apparent from the earthwork evidence (Sabin & Donaldson 2007, 24).

Ground Penetrating Radar survey covered a more limited area. It revealed defensive structures, an access way and a possible building outline south-east of the motte (Archer 2007, figure 5).

During the geophysical work medieval pottery sherds, possibly of Bath A/B fabric (12th to 13th century) were seen on the ground surface of 'inner bailey 3' (called 'bailey two' in this report, see site plan Appendix 1) and outside the south-west outer earthworks. Outside the north-west outer earthworks, a large handle of glazed 14th- or 15th-century Minety Ware was also found. A fragment of sarsen stone was discovered immediately south of the motte in 'inner bailey 4' (called 'inner bailey' in this report, see site plan Appendix 1) and another immediately north of the motte in 'inner bailey 3'. Burnt stone fragments and clay were observed within the northern defensive banks. Worked stone from Scrope's tower was also evident (Sabin & Donaldson 2007, 6-7).

EARTHWORK DESCRIPTION

The remains of the castle are mapped at 1:1,000 scale on the survey plan (Appendices 1 and 2) inside the back cover of this report. The plans show the parts of the castle as named here and letters referring to features mentioned in the account below.

The castle is contained within a perimeter circuit of contour-following banks and ditches, which enclose approximately 4ha of the promontory on which it is situated. Three major cross banks and ditches partition this enclosure into four baileys. The inner bailey, containing the core of the castle, lies at the southern end of the site, occupying the head of the promontory overlooking the By Brook and Broadmead Brook confluence. Here, in a strong defensive position, the lower part of a keep is embedded in the corner of a substantial earth and rubble enclosure of irregular plan. The remaining baileys form a row running north-east from the inner bailey, the furthest defences of the outer bailey crossing relatively level ground to cut off the natural spur.

PERIMETER ENCLOSURE

Figure 8: Southern defences looking east: main rampart to the left and counterscarp bank to the right

The perimeter defences consist of an inner bank with an external ditch and counterscarp which form complete circuit, except for entrance gaps. They are well-preserved overall, particularly outside the golf course. The bank is a substantial feature, 15-20m wide. It varies in height, but it is generally at least 2m high externally. Internally, it is intermittent and generally 1 to 1.5m high. The ditch is V-shaped in profile, approximately 10m wide and 1.5m deep. Its southern extent, where it follows the steep natural hill slope, cuts into underlying bedrock. Here the ramparts are the most imposing, with the main bank up to 3m high externally and the ditch 1.5m deep. The presence of a large amount of embedded rubble and fragments of masonry facing indicate that the bank was probably revetted and possibly surmounted by a wall which has collapsed. The counterscarp bank is also most prominent on the south-eastern side of the castle. It becomes a terrace on the steeper slopes towards the tip of the promontory. Intermittent breaks of slope beyond the main earthworks hint that there could have been a further outer earthwork circuit.

Figure 9: Southern defences looking west, with the main bank to the right

There are few breaks in the perimeter circuit. Two major gaps are found where the access driveway enters and exits the outer bailey. Smaller gaps occur at the southern tip (1), in the south-east side of the inner bailey (2) and where a path leads into the ditch between the second bailey and the third bailey (3).

A sub-rectangular platform (4), c12x5m in plan and c0.5m high, embanked on its

lower side, overlies the ditch and counterscarp on the south-eastern side of the circuit. It appears to be a building platform, approached from below by a causeway crossing the counterscarp bank diagonally.

INNER BAILEY

The inner bailey is separated from bailey two by a bank and an external ditch. The main route of entry into it is through a breach in the bank and a corresponding causeway across the ditch. This is a continuation of the main path through the site, which appears to be later, since it cuts through the bank revealing its rubble and earth composition. It similarly cuts through the other inter-bailey earthworks.

The northern corner of the inner bailey is cut off by an embanked sub-triangular enclosure, or ringwork, standing up to 4m above the ground surface. Its southern side has a shallow external ditch, which has probably been filled in. Its northern side appears to overlie the dividing bank between the inner bailey and bailey two. Its western side is delimited by the earthworks of the perimeter enclosure, at the junction with which the southern tip of its circuit terminates. The earthwork relationships indicate that this enclosure post-dates both the perimeter enclosure and the bank and ditch dividing the inner bailey from bailey two.

Figure 10: Western rampart of the inner bailey, exterior view looking north with the counterscarp bank (left) and the ditch becoming a terrace on the steep natural slope

Figure 11: Western rampart of bailey two, with the ditch continuing as a slight ledge

Figure 12: Rock outcropping from the southern ramparts of the inner bailey

Collapsed masonry and a break of slope (5) on the top of the northern and north-western banks of the enclosure continue the line of a wall, of which a fragment of the masonry face (6) is visible. Earth and rubble are also visible in the southern arm of the enclosure, which contains further collapsed walling.

Figure 13: Masonry fragment in the perimeter bank on the northern side of the ringwork

The base of the rectangular tower is embedded in the eastern corner of the ringwork, its walls surrounded by a small mound. The tower does not survive above the embedded level, but it is still up to c3.5m high from its floor level internally. Its wall faces show its construction of coursed limestone rubble in lime mortar with a looser rubble core. Concrete blocks have been used for modern restoration.

The enclosure also contains three conjoined sub-square depressions (7), approximately 8m wide and 1m deep on their highest sides, in its north-western corner. Each is similar in size and plan and their layout suggests that they could be the footprints of stone-robbed buildings built into the rear of the defences and facing a small courtyard. An irregular depression with an accompanying mound (8) west of the keep may be the result of later stone-robbing.

Figure 14: Ringwork bank and remains of the tower mound, viewed from the east

Figure 15: Revetment walling on top of the ringwork bank (6 on survey plan)

The core of the castle has been categorised variously by archaeologists as a motte and bailey or a ringwork. While there is a catena of intermediate forms (Creighton 2000, 107) it lacks a true motte mound and, as suggested by Creighton (2000, 114), the earthworks are best described as an irregular ringwork. Ringworks, perhaps the simplest and one of the earliest forms of defensive earthwork, could be thrown up around an existing building (Higham & Barker 1992, 194). They were generally circular but could be less regular where a natural scarp formed part of the defences, as at Castle Combe. They were known in pre-Conquest England and continued to be constructed in the Norman period, pre-dating and overlapping with mottes. Mottes were a Norman import broadly dating from the late-11th century and early-12th century (Liddiard 2005, 18, 23), though later examples are found in the north of England (Welfare et al 1999, 59-60). Castle studies have identified ringworks as a fairly common form in Wiltshire and those in the county are said to be especially powerful (Cathcart King 1983, 497). Examples are known at: Trowbridge, where a motte was added to a sub-rectangular ringwork; Old Sarum, where a ringwork was inserted into an Iron Age hillfort and Ludgershall, where there is a double ringwork (Creighton 2000, 114).

Figure 16: Remains of the keep in 2009, viewed from the south-west

The remainder of the inner bailey occupies the head of the promontory, cut off from bailey two by a bank and ditch (9) c1.5m high and c1.3m deep. Its remaining sides are delimited by the earthworks of the perimeter enclosure, which here follow the crest of the natural slope. Earthworks and traces of stone settings indicate the

positions of former buildings within the inner bailey. Six sub-square depressions (10) behind the south-eastern rampart appear to be stone-robbed footings of a range of buildings abutting the rear of the defences. They include a well-defined sub-rectangular embanked depression, which was interpreted as a 'substantial building' by the resistivity survey (Sabin & Donaldson 2007, 14; see Appendix 4). A smaller platform continues the row to the south. A gap (2) in the perimeter defences, with an accompanying causeway across the ditch, lies next to these depressions. It is connected to a path (11) which cuts the ramparts obliquely. This may be a post-castle breach associated with stone extraction from the site, particularly since it leads downhill in the direction of the village.

A level area separates these features from three large sub-circular and sub-rectangular depressions (12) immediately to the north-west, each measuring approximately 10m long by 8m wide and 0.5m deep. These earthworks may also be robbed building footings. Beyond is a substantial L-shaped feature which stands over 1m high (13). It follows the general layout of the building footings and a hollow-way or ditch skirts its eastern side. West of feature 13, and partially enclosed by it, is part of a further embanked sub-rectangular building platform (14), the western side of which fades out where it nears the perimeter defences.

Figure 17: Remains of Scrope's 19th-century tower at the southern tip of the inner bailey

Also, within the inner bailey are the remains of Scrope's stone tower, built in the 19th century and demolished in the 1950s. The only visible trace is a rubble mound (15) approached by a stone revetted cut across the ramparts (16). This cut opens

onto a path along the ditch, leading to a viewing platform (17) overlooking the river confluence. The tower was one of a series commissioned by Scrope to mark historic sites on his estate. Described as 'a rude round tower' (Scrope 1852, 11), it is probably the 'Castle Tower' depicted on a photograph of c1912 (figure 18). An ashlar voussoir stone from a window or door head lies on the ground close to its ruins.

Figure18: Scrope's tower in c1912 [©Swindon & Wiltshire Archives, ref. P2092]

Figure 19: Pathway (16) crossing the perimeter bank in the direction of Scrope's tower

BAILEY TWO

Bailey two joins the north-eastern side of the inner bailey, separated from it by a bank and ditch (18) which appears to be partially overlain by the ringwork. The ringwork bank rises c3m above the interior of bailey two, while its accompanying ditch is c1.5m deep. The ditch is interrupted by the access causeway and a pit (19) adjacent to it. A terminal at the bank's south-eastern end (opposite 3) indicates that this part of the defences may have been heightened. There is no corresponding terminal in the ditch, which opens out onto the perimeter defences. As with the inner bailey, the north-western and south-eastern sides of bailey two are enclosed by earthworks of the perimeter enclosure following the crest of the steep natural slope.

The north-eastern boundary of the bailey is delimited by a bank and ditch (20) which resembles and is parallel with that bordering the inner bailey. The bank, c1.5m high, is composed of earth and rubble and its external ditch is c1m deep. At least some of the rubble in the bank, as in the other cross banks, is likely to be the remnants of a collapsed wall the former line of which is evident in breaks of slope. The north-western ends of both the bank and ditch end abruptly at terminals, suggesting possible refurbishment. The main path breaches the bank and forms a causeway across the ditch, aligned opposite the similar breach in feature 18. The south-eastern end of the ditch continues beyond the perimeter earthworks, cutting

through the bank, ditch and counterscarp, beyond which it turns sharply to follow an outer bank and terrace (21) running parallel with the ramparts. This feature is cut by path 11, which crosses the ramparts diagonally, but remnants continue beyond.

Figure 20: Earthwork dividing the inner bailey and bailey two, view from the north-west

Like the inner bailey, bailey two contains a high concentration of building platforms. At least eight were recorded during the survey. The most prominent are three conjoined sub-rectangular embanked platforms (22) bordering the ringwork ditch. They are delimited by well-defined banks, c0.5m high. The central platform also has an external ditch c0.3m deep. The geophysical survey recorded a low resistance anomaly associated with this ditch, interpreted as possibly a drain, and showed that it may extend further to the north-west and south-east (Appendix 4). The ringwork ditch forms the south-western extent of these platforms, creating the impression that they may have been cut by it. The geophysical survey records buried foundations of walls here (Appendix 4).

Another well-defined embanked sub-rectangular platform (23), approximately 12m long by 7m wide, parallel with the perimeter defences and separated from the western bailey bank by two sub-square depressions, is situated in the south-western corner of the bailey. It probably marks the position of a further building, or a small complex of buildings. The geophysical survey recorded broad linear high resistance anomalies corresponding with the longest sides of feature 23, which were

interpreted as a former masonry structure (Appendix 4).

A similar earthwork feature (24) lies next to the bailey's north-eastern boundary, partially overlain by soil slippage from the bank. A single low bank (25) continues the line of this feature, terminating where it is cut by an oval embanked depression (26). Feature 24 has the regular appearance of a building platform, though its masonry has probably been robbed, since the resistivity survey recorded structural debris in the area surrounding it (Appendix 4). Another high resistance rectilinear anomaly, possibly building remains, recorded by the resistivity survey corresponded with feature 25. Feature 26 is irregularly shaped, runs against the layout of the building and bailey earthworks and cuts feature 25. It is probably the result of post-castle activity, such as minor quarrying. It corresponds with a broad high resistance anomaly on the geophysical survey, which was interpreted similarly (Appendix 4). A series of smaller shallow depressions, (27) (28) (29) and (30) are more difficult to interpret. 27 and 29 do not relate to the wider layout of the bailey and may be tree throw holes or stone-digging pits. Feature 28, an embanked sub-square feature, adjoins platforms 22, while feature 30 is sub-rectangular and detached from other earthworks. They appear to be connected with castle settlement, since alignment of both follows the layout of other earthworks which are probable building platforms.

Figure 21: Central building platform 22 in bailey two, viewed from the north

Three more potential building platforms are located south-east of the main path through the bailey. The most prominent is an embanked sub-rectangular

depression (31) adjacent to the entrance gap in the bailey's north-eastern boundary. This has the distinct appearance of a building platform, although no underlying structural evidence was encountered by the geophysical survey (Appendix 4). Two further depressions immediately south-west of it, one sub-square and partially embanked (32), the other sub-rectangular without a bank (33), are aligned differently to the general layout of the castle and its interior. Both correspond to buried structures (Sabin & Donaldson 2007, 14) and may also be the remains of buildings. Platform 31 overlies the northern side of feature 32, indicating that it is of a later phase.

BAILEY THREE

The north-eastern boundary of bailey two (20) serves as the south-western side of bailey three. The north-eastern side of bailey three is delimited by a further earth and rubble bank with an external ditch (34) parallel to the other sub-dividing earthworks. Its bank stands up to c1.2m high and its ditch is c1.2m deep. As in other areas of the castle, the bank has breaks in slope and remnants of collapsed walling.

Figure 22: Internal subdivision bailey three, view from the south-east

The south-eastern and north-western sides of bailey three are defined by the perimeter earthworks. These are cut by the ditch of bailey two and overlain by its bank and counterscarp, perhaps indicating a refurbishment phase when the castle's core defences were strengthened.

Bailey three has a lesser internal subdivision (35) running parallel with its south-western boundary and cutting off a narrow strip of its area. It is defined by a bank c0.6m high, flanked on its north-eastern side by a ditch c0.5m deep. The purpose of the subdividing earthworks enclosing such a narrow strip of ground is uncertain. Similar in form and layout to the more prominent inter-bailey divisions, they are overlain by the perimeter bank to the north-west and truncated to the south-east, indicating that they may have been an earlier defensive line which was superseded by the larger bank and ditch (20) during an episode of refurbishment. An alternative explanation may be an abortive attempt at concentric defence (M Bowden pers comm), whereby there would have been multiple defensive circuits inside each other rather than a single curtain wall and inner stronghold.

Within the narrow strip enclosed by the sub-division there are four small features which are potential building platforms (36, 37, 38 and 39). Feature 36 is a sub-rectangular scoop, c4m x 8m, perhaps the site of a building constructed against the bailey bank or wall (35). On the same alignment and following the general layout of other potential buildings are 37 and 38, slighter, sub-rectangular, depressions measuring c5m x 3m. Feature 39, a sub-square depression of similar size and layout to 37 and 38, is situated next to a larger sunken area, 40, perhaps an adjoining yard.

Figure 23: Feature 41, a large sub-rectangular depression of uncertain date and purpose

The most prominent earthwork in bailey three is a substantial sub-rectangular depression (41), c2.0m deep, embanked on its south and west sides. It appears to

cut into feature 35 and hence post-dates this earthwork. The ditch of 35 and its corresponding bank turns at 90 degrees west of feature 4 and at the south-eastern end of feature 41, while its continuation north-west of feature 41 is a straight line of bank and ditch. Feature 41 is difficult to interpret. A cut in the bailey's north-eastern boundary is situated directly opposite it and this breach in the defences may be associated with it. However, it was not possible to examine the intervening area between the two features due to dense scrub growth. Feature 41 has a regular form and so it appears to be of deliberate construction, yet it lacks any obvious entrance. It is disproportionately deep to be a medieval fishpond and situated in an unlikely place away from the core of the castle to be a water cistern. It is tentatively interpreted as a pond post-dating the castle, in the absence of evidence for any other function.

The northern part of the bailey is heavily overgrown with scrub and so it was not possible to survey this area. However, earthworks of further building remains continue into the vegetation and eight small sub-rectangular scoops (43), measuring roughly 8m x 6m and 0.2m deep, were surveyed in the south-eastern corner of the bailey, all of which coincide with possible structures recorded during the geophysical survey (Appendix 4).

Figure 24: North-east boundary of bailey three (feature 34)

OUTER BAILEY

The perimeter earthworks extend north-east beyond bailey three to enclose the outer bailey. As elsewhere in the circuit, they comprise an inner bank with an external ditch and counterscarp bank. The bank has been disturbed on the north-west side by landscaping for the golf course inside the bailey. Here, externally, the bank, ditch and counterscarp form a double terrace on the north-western hillslope. This has been used as a path. The ditch and counterscarp bank on the north and north-east sides are less prominent where they skirt the edge of the fairway.

Figure 25: Perimeter earthworks on the eastern side of the outer bailey, exterior view

A driveway serving the golf course enters the eastern corner of the outer bailey, runs alongside feature 34 and then cuts across it to exit the castle at its junction with the western perimeter defence. A putting green has been constructed in its south-western corner of the outer bailey and the remainder of its area is used as a fairway. Two pillow mounds (45), each almost 50m long and 10m wide, situated end-to-end, cross the fairway. Their low, but well-defined, linear banks are c0.1m high and surrounded by slight ditches. It is widely accepted that the vast majority of extant pillow mounds are post-medieval (Williamson 2006, 52). These examples perhaps formed part of the rabbit warren mentioned in 15th-century manorial documents. The only other earthwork in the outer bailey is a small stock pond (44) close to the south-eastern boundary. Ponds of this form have a wide date range, but most in Wiltshire are believed to have been constructed in the 19th or early-20th century.

Figure 26: The outer bailey interior, looking west. The linear earthwork is the pillow mound

Figure 27: Cattle pond in outer bailey

The absence of building platforms in the outer bailey could be due to post-castle

levelling, but it is more likely that this part of the castle was used differently from the other baileys. No earthworks other than the pillow mounds and cattle pond are visible in the outer bailey on aerial photographs pre-dating the golf course so, if there had been indications of settlement, they were destroyed prior to the golf course's creation. The presence of the pillow mounds also suggests that had there been other earthworks they ought to have survived.

SURROUNDING AREA

The steep slopes of the promontory on which the castle is situated are covered with dense woodland and fallen trees. The plateau to its north-east is taken up by the golf course, which is constantly in use. Field examination of the castle's wider setting was therefore not possible.

INTERPRETATION

The earthworks at Castle Combe are complex and of multiple phases, so no interpretation can be definitive. However, a broad relative chronology is proposed here from analysis of the earthworks and other visible remains.

The defensive earthworks of the perimeter enclosure strongly correspond with surviving ramparts at known Iron Age promontory forts, indicating a probable prehistoric origin. While documentary evidence for the castle itself is absent and its date of construction is uncertain, its plan, earthwork form and historical context all suggest a post-Conquest foundation. The earthwork evidence demonstrates that the defences were strengthened in stages, with later reinforcement appearing to be concentrated on the inner core. Here a ringwork was probably superimposed onto an earlier layout, embedding the lower part of a pre-existing tower. This may have occurred during the Anarchy period, when the castle lay within an area of conflict and was an important strategic stronghold housing a mint. Despite later stone robbing, building platforms remain visible in all baileys except the outermost, indicating that the castle was once densely populated.

While the castle's origins are obscure, it has long been argued that the perimeter enclosure originated as an Iron Age promontory fort. Its location, large area and the form of the earthworks are consistent with this theory. The closest hillfort is Bury Wood Camp (ST 81817396), approximately 3km to the south. This is larger, covering 9.2ha, but it occupies a similar promontory location at the confluence of two streams. Dyrham Camp, to the west, at ST74157672, also occupies a steep summit overlooking the confluence of two streams. Its area, 4.8ha, is comparable with that of the Castle Combe enclosure and it is defined by earthworks of similar form and scale. Re-use of hillforts, particularly those in prominent and strategically useful positions, was not uncommon and many medieval castles were placed at points in the landscape which had been the focus of earlier activity. Some placing may have been coincidental, but re-using existing structures minimised the cost of construction. Notable examples include: the Norman ringwork in an Iron Age enclosure at Old Sarum; castles within hillforts at Hembury, Devon; the Herefordshire Beacon; Castle Hill, Almondbury, West Yorkshire; Caus, Shropshire; Barwick-in-Elmet, West Yorkshire and 'The Rings', Loddiswell, Devon.

Use of the site in the intervening period between the abandonment of a probable hillfort and the construction of the castle is not known, but occupation was not necessarily continuous. Hillfort sites attracted activity in the late Roman period (mid-late 4th century), usually following a period of abandonment. They were sometimes used as sites for Roman shrines and the find of Roman architectural fragments in the keep (see 'Previous Work' above) indicates the presence of a high-status Roman site somewhere in the vicinity, if not on the hill itself. Castles are also known to have re-occupied locations with high status or religious connotations, for

example William I's keep was raised on the podium of a Claudian temple at Colchester (Creighton 2002, 70). The basis for antiquaries' claims that the castle began as a Saxon stronghold, which was destroyed by the Danes, is not known, but some Wiltshire castles were built over or close to Anglo-Saxon occupation sites, for example Ludgershall and Trowbridge (Hughes 1989, 34; Creighton 2002, 70; Liddiard 2005, 28). It has been suggested that the castle tower, from its small scale and form, may have originated as part of a late Saxon complex, which was encased in earth and its upper storeys added to transform it into part of the post-Conquest castle (pers comm Andrew Saunders, quoted by Barber 2009, 10). Re-use of sites of existing importance is particularly characteristic of castles dating from the Norman Conquest (Creighton 2002, 70), perhaps indicating an early date for the castle's construction despite the lack of documentary evidence for it prior to 1478.

Reinforcement of ownership and territorial control were usually the central motives in decisions to construct castles. Many were founded in the sparsely documented period between 1066 and the mid-12th century, with a probable peak around *c*1100 (Creighton 2002, 46). This is therefore a likely period for the castle's initial foundation, as is also reflected in its plan and structures. Rectangular keeps, the dominant form from the 10th to 12th centuries, were gradually supplanted by great towers of circular plan and by 1200 the Anglo-Norman keep was declining in favour of accommodation in gatehouses and outer curtain defences (Hislop 2016, 138).

The embedding of the tower within the ringwork may have occurred in the 12th century, when the phenomenon of enmotted towers was most prevalent (Creighton & Wright 2016, 102). Enmotted towers were a hallmark of the Anarchy period, when the construction of great donjons evolved from being a royal to a magnate prerogative (Creighton & Wright 2016, 115). Ringworks were appropriate forms for the enclosure of extant structures or buildings, either in a time of crisis or as an act of usurpation and conquest. They may also have been economical in terms of time and labour, pointing towards their employment as rapid and expedient forms of fortifications, especially where geological conditions were less favourable for motte construction (Creighton 2000, 117).

The castle's initial foundation is sometimes attributed to c1140, during the Anarchy period (1135-1154) when the Angevin-sympathising Dunstanvilles held the estate. However, according to Creighton (2000, 114), although an initial Anarchy period fortification on the site cannot be discounted, the castle is more probably an earlier foundation, perhaps of Henry I (1100-1135), which was refortified in this period. Coulson (1994, 67) further stresses that while castles were the focus of defensive investment during the Anarchy, the majority had been regularly founded soon after the Conquest and were already active residentially and administratively. Those built in direct furtherance of the conflict were more likely to be ephemeral campaign works and siege works (Coulson 1994, 67). Ringworks have also been discussed as

a morphological category associated with the Anarchy period (Everson *et al* 2000, 97), as has the re-use of hillforts (Creighton & Wright 2016, 99-100).

The addition of the ringwork and the heightening of the tower may have thus been part of reinforcements to the castle's defences during the conflict. Royal authority was weak and had limited reach beyond south-east England during this period, allowing barons to increase their personal power and create autonomous areas. Castle Combe lay at the heart of a heavily contested region and in an area of landscape 'devastation' (Creighton 2000, 244). Although the castle does not feature in surviving records of the civil war, it occupied a strategic position defending the approach to Bristol from the east and it is believed to have contained a mint producing lion type coinage of Robert, Earl of Gloucester (Archibald 2001, 76), so the need for strong defences would have been paramount. Earl Robert appears to have been exercising Matilda's coinage prerogative on the same basis as he was carrying out administrative and military duties on her behalf. The issue probably began in 1143 and ended in 1149 (Archibald 2001, 78-79). The key West Country mint for Matilda's coinage was in Bristol, but mints at Castle Combe and Trowbridge complemented it, as part of a tight network in what was in effect a small breakaway state (Creighton & Wright 2016, 145).

From the second half of the 12th century onwards the construction of defences principally in stone was becoming the norm (Hislop 2016, 54). Henry II's reign (1154-1189) was tranquil and in a long period which was almost without emergencies the obvious way of building a castle was in stone (Cathcart King 1972, 107). This provides a probable date range for the construction of some of castle's stone walls, which may have been a later addition to the defences. They were likely to have been completed prior to the 13th century, since their layout does not reflect later developments in castle design, particularly the shift in emphasis away from great towers to perimeter defence concentrated on the curtain walls with mural towers and increasingly strong gatehouses. Later castles, such as Bolingbroke, Lincolnshire and Beeston, Cheshire, were essentially fortified encientes, curtain walls with mural towers, lacking a donjon (Gravett 2009, 11, 24).

Despite the prominence of entrances in many medieval castles, at Castle Combe the location of the entrance is unclear. No earthwork remains of flanking towers are apparent next to gaps in the defences and the layout of internal features provides few clues. Early entrances could be rudimentary, such as Richmond's 11th-century entrance, which was simply a pierced curtain wall with perhaps no more than a gate initially, and until the last quarter of the 12th century a single rectangular tower pierced by a gateway remained the dominant type (Hislop 2016, 165). At Castle Combe, the breach in the perimeter rampart at (1), on the southern tip of the inner bailey, could be an original entrance. This would have involved an extremely steep approach, but it would have maximised the castle's visual impact and made it more easily defensible. Another possible location for an original entrance is the gap (2) in

the south-eastern side of the inner bailey. This would also have involved a steep approach, but it would have allowed entry into the castle's inner sanctum at a point of maximum impact, directly facing the ringwork and tower. Several paths, of unknown date, lead towards the castle's south-eastern side. Where the golf course driveway exits the north-western rampart of the outer bailey it obliquely cuts the earthworks at the junction between the third and outer baileys, indicating a later breach. The point where the driveway enters the eastern tip of the outer bailey is another potential position for the castle's original entrance.

How the baileys were entered is even less clear. The only gaps in their sub-dividing ramparts are where the present path runs through the site, cutting sharply through the earth and rubble banks indicating that it is of a later date.

The whereabouts of an entrance to the ringwork is equally obscure and, since there are no breaches in its circuit, its rampart may have been crossed by a bridge or steps which have left no visible trace. After the burial of a tower's lower storey, access was commonly by a timber flying bridge, as seen on the Bayeux Tapestry. At South Mimms, Devon, where a square wooden tower rose from stone foundations in the centre of the motte, entry was at ground level by a tunnel through the body of the motte into the basement of the tower (Kent, Renn & Streeton 2013), so more unusual ways to access the core of a castle were also possible. Feature 22 is clearly the foundations of a substantial building which, from its plan, could have flanked an entrance facing the blocked door of the tower, but this would have been entirely blocked by the ringwork.

Although was not possible to determine whether all the building platforms were contemporary with each other, their density indicates that the castle was well populated. Most share a common alignment and many face inwards onto courtyards or thoroughfares, making use of the backs of the defences for their rear walls. The exact functions of individual buildings cannot be determined from the earthworks, but they are likely to follow the pattern seen at excavated sites. A great hall, kitchen, chapel and the living quarters of the lord and his family were almost certainly situated in the inner bailey, with the other baileys housing wider settlement and peripheral structures. This arrangement is reflected in the sizes of the building platforms, the largest being found in the inner bailey and bailey two. The great hall was often the largest building, though its size could range from modest structures, 11.4m x 6.6m at Hadleigh, Essex, to large examples like that at Skenfrith, Monmouthshire, measuring 25.6 x 6.75m, both of which incorporated a curtain wall to save construction costs (Coulson 1994, 36-38). Other buildings close to the great hall may have included a brewery, a bakery, barns, dovecots and stables (Coulson 1994, 41-42). Granaries and storehouses would also have formed an essential part of the castle's structures from the outset, important in case of a siege or in case the owner and his retinue remained in residence for a while. A trend for new suites of accommodation continued into the 14th century as baronial

households became less itinerant, their sizes increased and a desire for more privacy developed (Coulson 1994, 53-64). It may have been during this period that bailey three and bailey four accommodated the wider population.

The absence of building platforms in the large outer bailey suggests that it was used differently from the other baileys. Situated furthest away from the strongly defended core of the castle, what it was intended to shelter was evidently less important than the contents of the inner baileys. Possible uses proposed for large outer baileys such as this include areas for corralling stock or secure pasture (Creighton & Wright 2016, 100; Creighton 2002, 39). They may also have served as assembly points for military forces or places of refuge for surrounding civilian populations (Creighton 2002, 39; Creighton & Wright 2016, 100). The outer bailey would also have been a likely site for the market which is known to have been held at the castle.

While Trowbridge and Devizes, with similar earthwork and multiple bailey sites, grew into large towns, it has been questioned why this did not happen at Castle Combe (P McMahon pers comm). The village clearly co-existed as a separate population centre from the castle in the medieval period and its growing importance as a cloth-making centre utilising the water power of the valley streams, combined with its more convenient location, was probably the driving force in the castle's demise once the need for a defensive stronghold had passed. Relocation of the seignurial seat to the village would almost certainly have marked the end of the castle's active life and its stonework may have provided materials for housing the influx of weavers and fullers in the expanding settlement in the valley below.

SIGNIFICANT AREAS AND FEATURES

The castle's national significance is undoubted and is acknowledged by its designation as a Scheduled Monument (List Entry Number: 1009580). Its earthworks, which are impressive and well preserved, are among the best medieval castle remains in Wiltshire. It has additional significance for its probable prehistoric origins as an Iron Age promontory fort.

The inner bailey and bailey two contain the highest density of archaeological features, most of which appear to be the remains of settlement contemporary with the castle. Bailey three was not fully examined by the current survey or previous geophysical work due to scrub density across much of its area, however earthworks are visible in the scrub-free parts indicating that there is high potential for further features associated with the castle's occupation to be hidden under the thorn thickets.

No settlement earthworks are present in the outer bailey, which contains relatively few visible archaeological features and appears to have had a different function to the castle's inner core. The pillow mounds and pond are well-defined and were almost certainly created after the castle had fallen out of use.

At the time of the survey sizeable wind-thrown trees littered the southern defences. Unstable trees continue to be problematic, particularly those growing directly on the earthworks (eg a large swaying tree on the bank of feature 34). Tree cover is less dense in the more sheltered interior areas of the baileys where, among standard trees, there is outgrown coppicing, scrub and some open areas. The scrub across parts of the interior masks archaeological features which are consequently absent from current site plans.

SURVEY METHOD

The survey was carried out using a Trimble 5600 Total Station Theodolite with a TSC3 controller. Survey data was processed in Geosite Office. The inked hachured plan was hand drawn and completed using Adobe Indesign.

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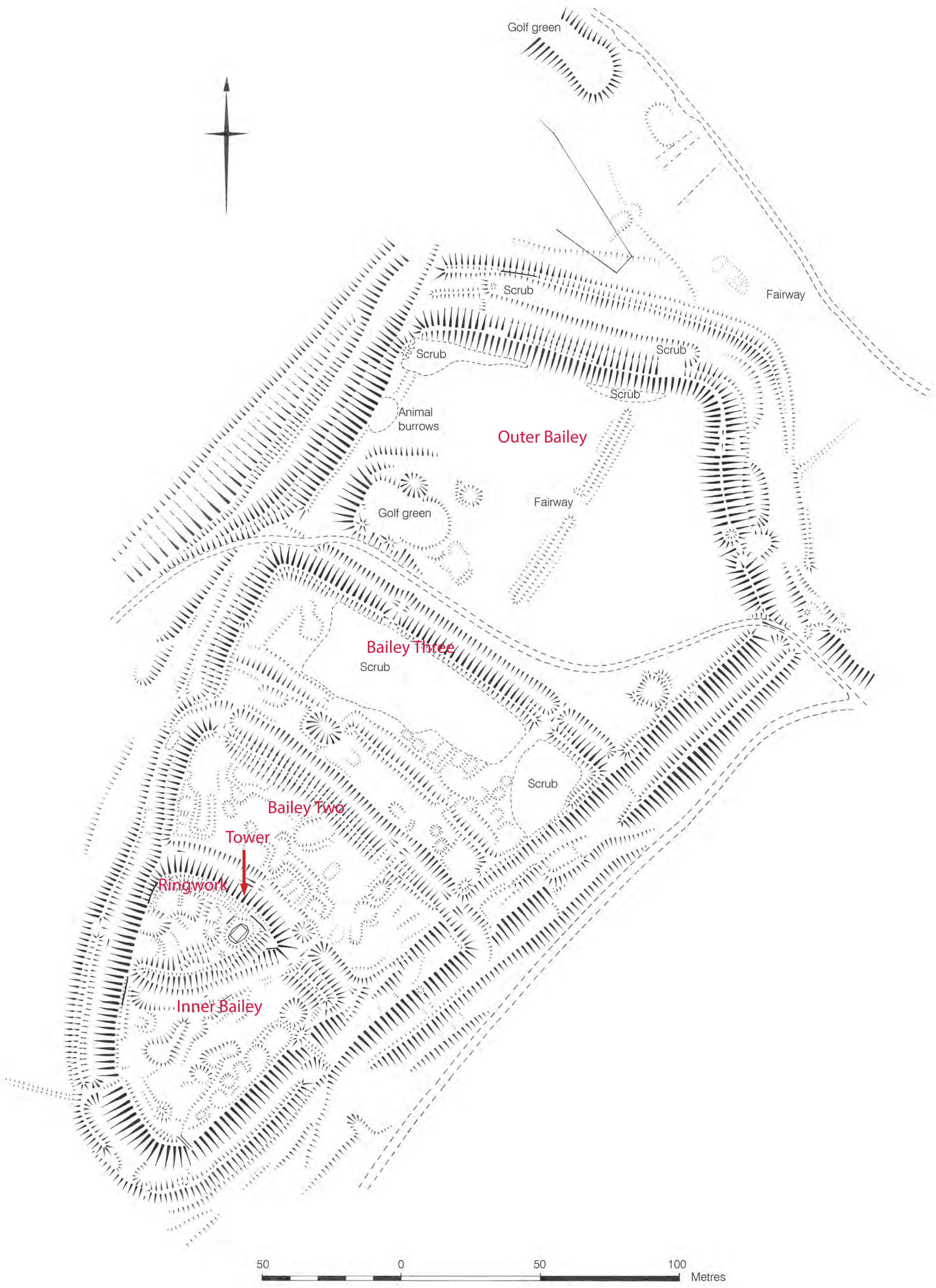
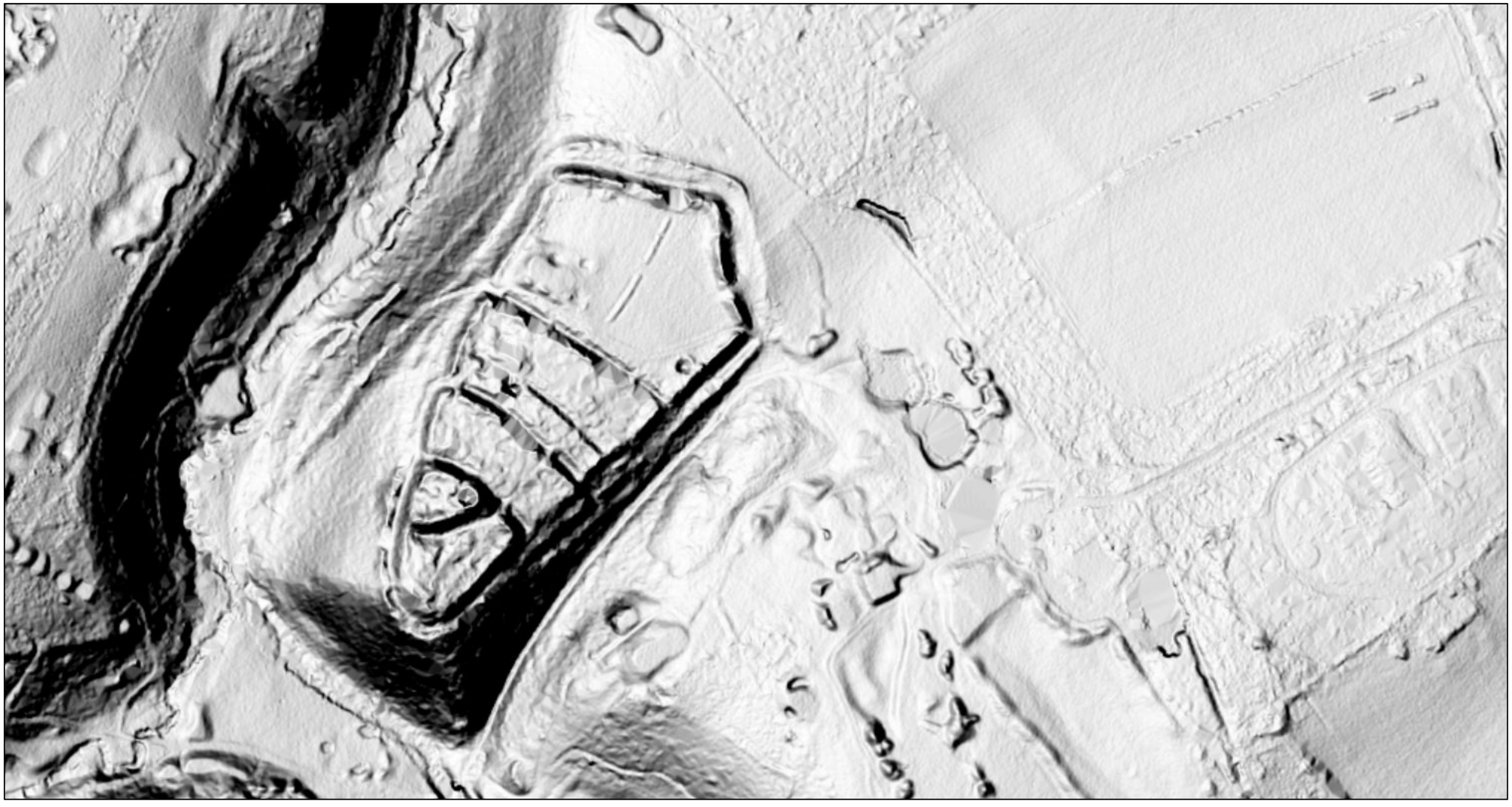


Appendix 1: Castle parts, as named in the survey report

Appendix 2: Castle earthworks, Castle Combe, Wilts. Surveyed at 1:1000 scale. Numbers refer to features mentioned in the survey report



08/12/2020, 16:15:46

LIDAR Composite 2019: 1m DTM Hillshade

High : 255

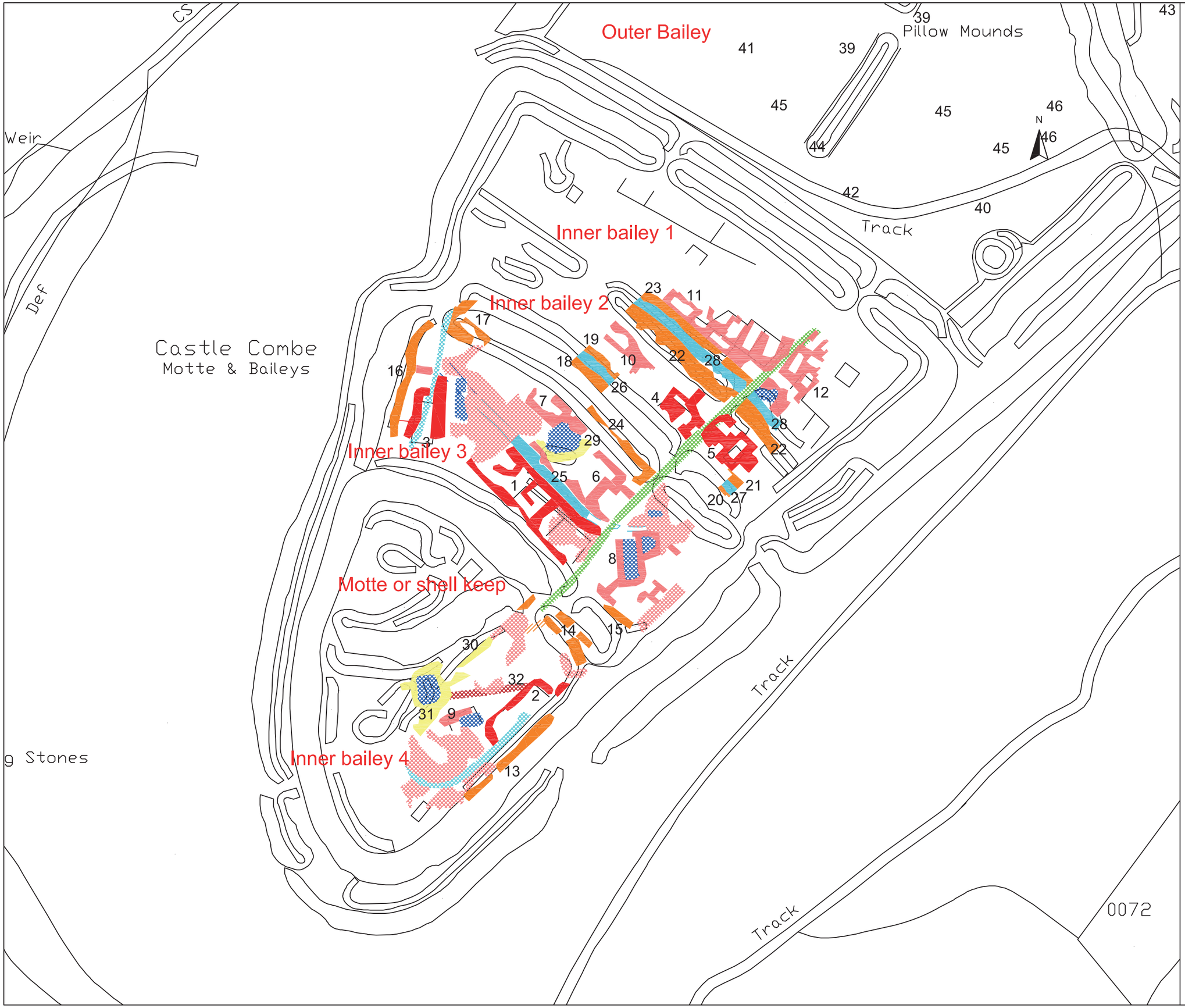
Low : 0

1:2,540

0 0.03 0.06 0.12 mi

0 0.05 0.1 0.2 km

Appendix 3: Environment Agency LIDAR image, north to the top



Archaeological Surveys

Geophysical Survey
Castle Combe Castle

Abstraction and interpretation of resistance anomalies

- High resistance anomalies associated with structural remains
- High resistance anomalies possibly associated with structural remains
- High resistance anomalies associated with defensive works
- Low resistance anomalies associated with ditches
- High resistance anomalies possibly caused by quarrying/ solid geology
- High resistance zones possibly associated with structural debris
- Low resistance zones associated with visible depressions
- Very low resistance response caused by wire netting
- High/low resistance response associated with track
- High resistance linear anomaly possibly associated with a former track

SCALE 1:1000

0m 10 20 30 40 50

FIG 06

Appendix 4: Geophysical survey by Sabin & Donaldson 2007 [© Archaeological Surveys 2007]

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